

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 467

FL 007 339

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TITLE Language Development in Pre-School Children: Transcripts of Children's Speech.
INSTITUTION Bristol Univ. (England). School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY Social Science Research Council, London (England).
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 8p.; The transcripts are available from Gordon Wells, Project Director, School of Education Research Unit, Univ. of Bristol, 19 Berkeley Square, Bristol BS8 1HF England

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Child Language; *Language Development; Language Learning Levels; Language Research; Microphones; Phonotape Recordings; Preschool Children; Psycholinguistics; *Tape Recordings; *Verbal Development

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study of language development is being conducted in which ten recordings of spontaneous speech are being made of 128 children at 3-month intervals. Children were stratified with respect to age, sex, birth month, social and educational family background and family occupations. A matrix was constructed for two groups of children, with entry ages of 15 months and 39 months. Recordings are made with a radio-microphone worn by the child. The radio receiver and the tape recorder are placed in the home and programmed to switch on for periods of 90 seconds at intervals of about 22 1/2 minutes between 9A.M. and 6P.M. The recording is later played to the mother to determine as much of the context and circumstances of the speech as possible. In the printed transcripts (not included here), the child's speech is in the left hand column, the speech of other participants in the center and contextual information on the right. Interpretations of utterances and descriptions of intonation are included where applicable. So far, the first recordings of each child have been transcribed and prepared for publication, totaling about 2500 pages. (CHK)

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UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Language Development in Pre-School Children

Transcripts of Children's Speech

The accompanying transcripts are part of the data being collected in the longitudinal study of language development in Bristol.* The characteristics of the sample of children studied and the method of making the recordings, together with the conventions used in transcription, are described in the following pages.

Ten recordings are being made of each child, at 3-monthly intervals. So far, the first recordings of each child has been prepared for publication; transcripts of later recordings may be published at a later date if there is a sufficient demand for them.

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* The research is being supported by a grant from the Social Science Research Council.

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Characteristics of the Sample

The sample was designed to be representative of the pre-school population of Bristol, whilst at the same time stratifying that population with respect to age, sex, social background and month of birth. Two ages of entry were selected, 15 months and 39 months in order to allow for an eventual overlap in the longitudinal study, and equal numbers of boys and girls were selected. Social background was assigned on a four interval scale, to be described below, and an attempt was made to select equal numbers of children with birth-days in each quarter of the year. The following classes of children were excluded from the study: those with any known form of handicap; those attending day nursery or in full time care; twins; and those whose parents were not both native speakers of English. The ideal sample was to consist of 128 children, with a small pool of reserves to replace any drop-outs that might occur.

The construction of the sample, which was concluded in December 1973, went through a number of stages:

1. Drawing of a random sample of boys and girls for the chosen months of birth, from the record of births held by the Medical Officer of Health.
2. Initial contact with families by Health Visitor. The Health Visitors were briefed beforehand about the nature of the project and were asked to tell the family that their child had been randomly chosen for the study and to request permission for a member of the project staff to call and explain the project. There was considerable wastage at this stage for a variety of reasons (shown in accompanying table); 63.4% of families accepted.

Accepted	63.4%
Handicapped	2.8%
Day Nursery	1.2%
Foreign	4.3%
Unsuitable	1.2%
No contact/Moved	16.5%
Refused	10.6%
TOTAL	100%

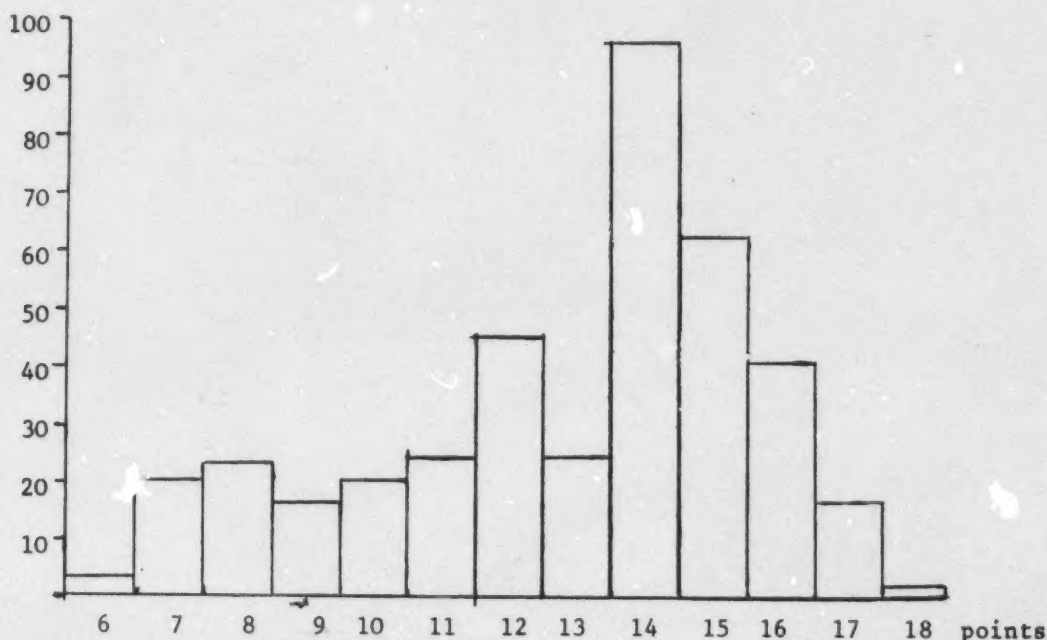
Results of initial
contact of families
in random sample

3. Of the 572 families who gave a positive response to the Health Visitor's initial contact, 382 were interviewed by members of the project staff, who explained the purpose of the research and asked for the families co-operation. 334 (87.4%) agreed to co-operate.

At this same interview information was obtained from both parents about their employment and education so that a more precise description could be made of the social background of the children. Points were then allotted for the occupational class of each parent using the Registrar-General's 5 point scale (Class I occupations receiving 1 point and Class II 2 points etc.) and for whether or not the parents had received more than minimal education (4 points for minimal education, and 2 points for education beyond minimal school leaving age). This gave a scale with a minimum of 6 points and maximum of 18. The

distribution of the children on this scale of family background is shown in the histogram below.

No. of
families



Distribution of children on scale of family background.

On the basis of a similar distribution in the pilot study, the scale was divided in such a way as to give four classes of family background, A-D, roughly equal in numbers, the boundaries of the four classes falling between 9-10, 13-14, 15-16 respectively.

4. When information had been returned by the interviewers that allowed the children born in a particular month to be assigned to one of the four classes of family background, one child was picked for each age x sex x family background cell in the sample matrix. This child being the first in the print-out of the random sample who met the necessary criteria and whose family was willing to participate. This procedure was repeated for eight months of birth over one year. A small number of additional children were selected to replace possible drop-outs, the aim being to have one or two 'spare' children for each cell in the matrix.

A number of problems were encountered in carrying out this procedure, notably a difficulty in finding boys in Class D and the loss of some children after the first recording. However, the final sample approximated very closely to the ideal, except that month of birth was skewed towards the end of the year.

In order to preserve anonymity, the children are referred to by a code number. This is made up of 5 components: age-group,

S(Senior) or J (Junior); month of birth; class of family background A-D; sex, M or F; index number of child within the cell of the matrix. The complete matrix of the sample, with the code numbers of all the children being studied, is given below for the easy identification of the transcripts.

OLDER BOYS					OLDER GIRLS			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1	S10AM1	S10BM1	S10CM1	S04DM4	S10AF1	S10BF1	S10CF1	S10DF1
2	S03AM2	S12BM2	S12CM2	S04DM6	S12AF2	S01BF5	S12CF2	S12DF2
3	S04AM4	S01BM3	S01CM3	S06DM8	S03AF3	S03BF6	S03CF3	S01DF3
4	S04AM5	S03BM4	S01CM4	S09DM10	S04AF4	S04BF7	S03CF4	S03DF4
5	S06AM7	S04BM5	S01CM5	S09DM11	S06AF6	S06BF8	S04CF6	S03DF6
6	S06AM8	S06BM6	S04CM7	S06DM7	S07AF7	S07BF9	S06CF7	S03DF7
7	S09AM9	S06BM7	S07CM10		S09AF8	S09BF10	S07CF8	S04DF8
8	S09AM10	S09BM9	S09CM12		S09AF9	S01BF4	S07CF9	S09DF9
Extra		S09BM8	S07CM11					

YOUNGER BOYS					YOUNGER GIRLS			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1	J10AM1	J10BM1	J10CM2	J01DM1	J10AF1	J10BF1	J10CF1	J10DF1
2	J12AM2	J01BM3	J12CM3	J03DM3	J10AF2	J01BF3	J12CF2	J12DF2
3	J01AM4	J03BM4	J01CM4	J04DM4	J12AF3	J04BF5	J01CF3	J01DF3
4	J03AM5	J04BM6	J06CM7	J06DM5	J06AF6	J07BF7	J01CF4	J03DF4
5	J04AM6	J06BM7	J07CM8	J07DM6	J07AF7	J07BF8	J03CF5	J04DF5
6	J04AM7	J09BM10	J07CM9	J09DM8	J07AF8	J09BF9	J04CF6	J04DF6
7	J06AM8	J09BM11	J07CM10	J09DM11	J09AF9	J09BF10	J06CF7	J06DF7
8	J09AM9	J12BM2	J09CM12		J03AF5	J03BF4		J09DF10
Extra			J09CM13					J06DF8

Further information about each child is given on the front page of each transcript, together with information specific to that particular recording.

(a) Occupations of parents are described in terms relevant to the Registrar-General's classification.

(b) Classification of education:

Minimal: No formal full-time education beyond 15/16 years. No leaving qualifications.

Intermediate: Stayed on after minimal leaving age. Some leaving qualification, e.g.: C.S.E., 'O' or 'A' level.

Higher: Some form of higher education, leading to a qualification e.g.: H.N.D., Cert. of Ed., B.A., etc.

(c) Accommodation:

The categories used in describing accommodation are:

Housing: Council house; council flat (including floor number when known); private flat (including floor number); terrace house (large or small); semi-detached house; detached house.

Area: Council estate; inner city; residential suburb.

(d) Notes relevant to recording:

These include: information about any abnormal situation in the home; recent events of particular relevance to the recorded speech; faults in the technical execution of the recording.

The Recordings

The recordings have been made with a radio-microphone, worn by the child under his or her top garment. The radio receiver and the tape recorder to which it is linked, which are placed in some safe and convenient location in the home, are programmed, by a pre-set timing mechanism, to switch on for short periods at intervals throughout the day between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. The sampling periods, which are 90 seconds in duration occur at variable intervals averaging 22½ minutes between samples.

No observer is present in the home during the day, and the family are not aware of the precise times at which the equipment is switched on. The recordings are thus as 'natural' as it is possible to obtain. In order to compensate for the lack of contextual information, which could normally be recorded by an observer, the recording is played over to the mother, sample by sample, in the evening of the day on which the recording is made, and she is asked to recall, in as much detail as possible, the participants, location and accompanying activity for each recorded sample. This information is used in interpreting the speech and is included in the transcript.

Although 24 samples are recorded, not all of them may have been transcribed. The ideal is to obtain at least 100 utterances by the child from 18 samples, 3 samples being chosen at random out of each sequential block of 4. When the child is out of range, or there is a fault in the recording, the remaining sample is transcribed to compensate for what is missing. Where the child does not speak very much, additional samples may also be transcribed.

Layout and Conventions of Presentation

The speech of the child being studied is set out in the left-hand column. The speech of all other participants is set out in the centre column, with identifying initials where necessary. Each new utterance starts on a new line.

Contextual information is enclosed in square brackets [] and set out in the right hand column.

Interpretations of utterances and descriptions of intonation where applicable are enclosed in round brackets () and included immediately after the utterance to which they apply.

Utterances, or parts of utterances, about which there is doubt are enclosed in angular brackets < >. Where two interpretations are possible, they are both given, separated by an oblique stroke.

Except where there is doubt about the speaker's intended meaning, the speech is transcribed in Standard English Orthography. Symbols of International Phonetic Alphabet are used for utterances, or parts of utterances, which can be clearly heard, but which cannot be interpreted with certainty. Phonetic symbols are always enclosed by oblique strokes.

The following is a list of additional symbols used, with an explanation of their significance. (Stops and commas are not used as in normal punctuation.)

- ? Used at end of any utterance where an interrogative meaning is considered to have been intended.
- ! Used at the end of an utterance considered to have exclamatory intention.
- ' Apostrophe. Used as normal for contractions and elision of of syllables.
- CAPS. Capitals are used where part of an utterance receives unusually heavy stress to convey emphasis or contrastive meaning.
- * Used to indicate unintelligibility, for whatever reason. The number of asterisks corresponds as nearly as possible, to the number of words judged to have been uttered.
- ... Stops are used to indicate pauses. One stop is used for a very short pause. Thereafter, the number of stops corresponds to the estimated length of the pause in seconds. Pauses over 5 ..8.. seconds in length are shown with the figure for the length of the pause.
- Underlining. Where utterances overlap because both speakers speak at once, the overlapping portions are underlined.
- " " Inverted commas are used to enclose utterances considered to be 'Speech for Self'.
- ⌒ Slur mark indicates unbroken intonation contour where a pause or clause boundary might otherwise indicate the end of an utterance.
- Hyphen indicates a hiatus, either because the utterance is incomplete or because the speaker makes a fresh start at the word or utterance.
- (v) Used to indicate that the preceding word was used as a vocative, to call or hold the attention of the addressee.

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